

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MONTEV 00605 222007Z
ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 0605

FOR NSC PASTOR FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OAS, SHUM, UY, PPDC
SUBJECT: REPLY TO MENDEZ LETTER

REF: (A) MONTEVIDEO 0349 (B) MONTEVIDEO 0570

1. I UNDERSTAND THAT THERE ARE SOME RESERVATIONS
ABOUT HAVING PRESIDENT CARTER RESPOND TO PRESIDENT
MENDEZ' LETTER OF FEBRUARY 18, WHICH

PRESUMABLY EX-
PLAINS OUR LONG DELAY IN RESPONDING. I RECOMMENDED
THAT THE REPLY WOULD BE VERY USEFUL RECORD OF THE
EVENTS WHICH LED TO OUR NEGATIVE VOTE ON JANUARY 31.
I SUGGESTED A FIRM BUT POSITIVE LETTER.

2. AT THIS POINT THE FORM (I.E. RECEIVING A PRESI-
DENTIAL REPLY TO A PRESIDENTIAL REQUEST AND THE NEED
TO AVOID A RUPTURE IN PRESIDENTIAL DIALOGUE) OUTWEIGHS
THE SUBSTANCE. THE CARTER-MENDEZ DIALOGUE WAS
INITIATED BY PRESIDENT CARTER IN HIS AUGUST 1977
LETTER INVITING MENDEZ TO PARTICPATE IN THE
PANAMA CANAL TREATY SIGNING CEREMONIES. DURING
THEIR BILATERAL, PRESIDENT CARTER FOLLOWED
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THROUGH URGING MENDEZ TO CONTINUE THEIR DIALOGUE WITH
AN EYE TOWARD RESOLVING SOME OF OUR BILATERAL DIF-
FERENCES. IN A SECOND LETTER SEVERAL MONTHS LATER,
PRESIDENT CARTER CONTINUED TO PURSUE THIS INITIATIVE
AND INQUIRED AS TO THE STATUS OF SOME OF THE
IMPROVEMENTS MENDEZ HAD PROMISED DURING THE
SEPTEMBER BILATERAL. MENDEZ' RESPONSE WAS NOT

FULLY SATISFACTORY, IN THAT IT IGNORED SOME OF HIS COMMITMENTS, BUT IT WAS PROMPT, AND DID REITERATE HIS IMPORTANT INVITATION TO U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS VISITORS.

3. CONTINUING THE MOMENTUM OF THE DIALOGUE, MENDEZ TOOK THE INITIATIVE FOR THE FIRST TIME AND PETITIONED THE PRESIDENT IN HIS JANUARY 11 LETTER TO SUPPORT URUGUAY'S INVITATION TO HOST THE VIII OASGA.

4. OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS THE TWO PRESIDENTS HAVE ESTABLISHED AN ONGOING DIALOGUE BETWEEN THEM ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. THUS, IF WE NOW FAIL TO RESPOND IN THIS INSTANCE AT THE PRESIDENTIAL LEVEL, WE WILL GIVE THE CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WISHES TO BREAK OFF THE DIALOGUE HE INITIATED LAST SEPTEMBER.

5. IF THIS WERE TO HAPPEN THERE WOULD BE NEGATIVE INTERNAL REPERCUSSIONS HERE. IN BRINGING HIS CONCERNS TO MY ATTENTION, GENERAL ALVAREZ WAS APPEALING TO US NOT TO STRENGTHEN THOSE FORCES WHICH OPPOSE HIS LIBERATION PLANS. HE FACES STRONG ENOUGH OPPOSITION WITHOUT ANOTHER NEGATIVE ELEMENT BEING ADDED.

6. WE ARE ENGAGED IN AN EDUCATING AND INFLUENCING
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OPERATION HERE WITH RELATIVELY FEW WEAPONS AT OUR COMMAND OTHER THAN DIALOGUE. THE CARTER-MENDEZ MEETING WAS AN IMPORTANT PLUS IN INITIATING THAT DIALOGUE, ESPECIALLY SO WITH A LEADERSHIP GROUP WITH LITTLE CONFIDENCE AND A MOUNTAIN OF INHIBITIONS. WHILE THEY SINGLEMINDEDLY STORE UP THEIR HURTS, THEY ARE VERY MOVED BY CONTACT WITH THE MIGHTY. THUS, FAILURE BY THE PRESIDENT TO RESPOND, NO MATTER WHAT THE REASONS AND NO MATTER HOW WE TRY TO EXPLAIN THEM, WILL BE PERCEIVED HERE AS ANOTHER BLOW IN WHAT THEY VIEW AS A USG CAMPAIGN TO CASTIGATE THEM. IF NOT SENDING A PRESIDENTIAL RESPONSE SERVED A POSITIVE PURPOSE, I WOULD BE RECOMMENDING EXACTLY THAT. BUT IT WILL NOT. IT WILL HINDER OUR EFFORTS TO MOVE THIS LEADERSHIP PACK TO IMPROVE HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE.

7. THEREFORE, I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT THE PRESIDENT RESPOND WITH A PERSONAL MESSAGE ALONG THE LINES OF THE DRAFT I SUGGESTED IN REF. A.
PEZZULLO

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